



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# AFGHANISTAN

## Education

Fall 2009



Photo: USAID/Afghanistan

*USAID trained master educators, who, in turn, trained provincial counterparts. This program and the new 2006-2010 programs build on past successes training teachers and administrators.*

### EDUCATION SNAPSHOT

- More than two million children enrolled in USAID-supported primary schools.
- Nearly 500,000 students enrolled in USAID-supported secondary schools.
- Supporting 45,000 students annually in remote community-based schools.
- Trained nearly 10,500 teachers in an accelerated learning program and more than 2,600 university professors on modern teaching methods.
- Built or refurbished more than 680 schools.

Data as of October 2009

### BACKGROUND

According to the Central Statistics Office, Afghanistan has a population of approximately 22.5 million people and one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world. More than 11 million Afghans over the age of 15 cannot read or write. In rural areas, where three-fourths of all Afghans live, 90 percent of the women and more than 60 percent of the men are illiterate. Under the Taliban, girls were not allowed to go to school, fewer than 900,000 boys were enrolled, and many received religious education in lieu of academics. The implications of this lack of education can be felt in all spheres of life – from health care to governance. For example, Afghans lack access to information about good health practices and most of the country's judges and civil servants do not have more than a high school degree. However, today more than six million students are in school and the Ministry of Education is working with USAID and other donors to implement a five-year National Education Strategic Plan.

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

USAID's education strategy was designed in 2002 to meet the urgent need for textbooks, schools, new curricula, and trained teachers. The education strategy was expanded in 2004 to develop the capacity of the Afghan Government to improve education quality while simultaneously increasing access to opportunities in basic education, higher education, and non-formal training in literacy, employment skills, and youth leadership.

### IMPROVING BASIC EDUCATION

Increasing access to quality primary and secondary schools is an education priority. USAID is improving basic education through programs that strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Education, ensuring adequate school materials and environments for learning, and improving teacher performance and skills development.

Since Afghans lost years of formal schooling under the Taliban, many students are not at an age-appropriate grade level. USAID created an accelerated learning program to provide students denied an education the opportunity to complete two years of study in one year. This program trained an estimated 10,500 teachers in teaching methodologies for accelerated learning and enrolled nearly 170,000 students. More than half of those enrolled were girls. Due to these efforts, more than 80 percent of those who enrolled have completed courses equivalent to a grade six level.

To address the critical lack of qualified teachers, USAID is supporting the Ministry of Education's in-service teacher training program in 11 provinces. USAID provides training in subject-specific pedagogy as well as training for school leaders, delivered by district-based teacher training teams who provide follow-up to help the teachers implement new teaching methods. In remote areas where government schools are not yet established, USAID's community-based schools program is supporting 45,000 students each year.



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## Education (continued)



Photo: USAID/Afghanistan

*Students receive new textbooks. Between 2002 and 2008, USAID published 68 million textbooks in Dari and Pashto on various subjects for grades 1-12.*

Between 2002 and 2009, USAID printed more than 68 million textbooks in Dari and Pashto for grades 1-12 covering such subjects as language, math, biology, and geography. To strengthen the Ministries of Education and Higher Education, USAID provides advisors to help the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan develop and implement education policy.

### SUPPORTING HIGHER EDUCATION

USAID's higher education program is aimed at reversing the impact that decades of war and social upheaval have had on Afghanistan. USAID is increasing the capacity of Afghanistan's higher education system and improving institutional administration and pre-service secondary teacher education at 18 Faculties of Education across Afghanistan through pedagogical, English, and IT training. Sixteen new Faculties of Education buildings are planned to further improve the teaching and learning environment. USAID is also supporting the improvement of medical education at five universities and assisting the Ministry of Higher Education with the development of the National Higher Education Strategic Plan.

The American University in Afghanistan currently has 316 undergraduate degree students enrolled in a four-year liberal arts bachelors degree program. With USAID assistance, Kabul University Library is in the process of digitizing and cataloguing books for worldwide access. USAID has completed the rehabilitation of the women's dormitory in Kabul and successfully facilitated the transfer of skills for local management of the dormitory by the Ministry of Higher Education. The dormitory currently accommodates 1,100 girls studying at several tertiary institutions in Kabul.

### EXPANDING NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

In many villages, more than 90 percent of the women cannot read or write. USAID's large scale literacy and productive skills program takes place outside the formal educational system and focuses on providing skills to improve the livelihoods of women and men aged 15 and older. A USAID-funded technical advisory unit within the Ministry of Education is helping to strengthen the National Literacy Center and enhancing practical literacy, numeracy, and productive skills (vocational, business, and microfinance) training. It also provides access to training, materials, and modern teaching techniques in ten provinces, with a planned expansion to an additional ten provinces.

USAID's youth project has created male- and female-led youth development councils that provide opportunities for entrepreneurial young people to implement community-based small grants projects. The program provides practical learning opportunities for youth and prepares them to work with community leaders to support their country's reconstruction.

### SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

Since 2002 and in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, USAID has built or refurbished more than 680 schools throughout Afghanistan.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

USAID/Kabul  
6180 Kabul Place  
Dulles, VA 20189-6180  
202.216.6288  
0093 (0) 700-234-233  
<http://afghanistan.usaid.gov>  
[kabulaidinformation@usaid.gov](mailto:kabulaidinformation@usaid.gov)

On behalf of the American people, the U.S. government has provided humanitarian assistance and economic development to those in need since the Marshall Plan.